

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of processing a media file, said media file being adapted for rendering by an application program executed by a computing device, said method comprising:

determining whether a user-selected image file corresponding to media content contained in the media file is stored in a memory accessible by the computing device executing the application program;

if not, determining whether a third-party image file accessible by the computing device corresponds to the media content contained in the media file; and

displaying either the user-selected image file or the third-party image file as determined when the application program renders the media file corresponding thereto.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the application program comprises at least one of the following: a media player and an operating system shell.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the user-selected image file is stored in at least one of the following: a header of the media file, a shell folder, a registry, and a directory.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the third-party image file has a filename associated therewith, and wherein determining whether the third-party image file corresponds to the media content contained in the media file comprises searching for an identifier value in the filename, said identifier value being associated with an identifier and corresponding to the media content.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the identifier comprises WMCollectionID.

6. The method of claim 4, wherein the identifier value comprises a globally unique identifier.

7. The method of claim 1, further comprising identifying a version of the application program, and wherein determining whether the third-party image file corresponds to the media content contained in the media file comprises determining whether the third-party image file corresponds to the media content contained in the media file based on the identified version.
8. The method of claim 1, wherein the third-party image file comprises a reference to image data.
9. The method of claim 8, wherein the reference comprises a hyperlink.
10. The method of claim 1, further comprising rendering the media file with an image represented by either the user-selected image file or the third-party image file as determined.
11. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
sending an identifier value associated with the media file from the computing device to the metadata provider;
receiving metadata corresponding to the media content contained in the media file from the metadata provider in response to the sent identifier value, said received metadata including the third-party image file; and
storing the received third-party image file in a directory with the media file.
12. The method of claim 11, wherein the metadata provider comprises at least one of the following: a human operator, a local cache, a media library, and a remote server.
13. The method of claim 11, wherein the computing device and the metadata provider are coupled to a data communication network.

14. The method of claim 11, wherein storing the received third-party image file comprises storing the received third-party image file with a filename comprising an identifier value corresponding to the media content.

15. The method of claim 1, wherein the media content comprises audio, and wherein the third-party image file comprises album cover art.

16. One or more computer-readable media having computer-executable instructions for performing the method of claim 1.

17. A method for processing image files, said method comprising:
sending, from a computing device to a metadata provider, an identifier value associated with a media file, said media file storing media content to be rendered with an application program executed by the computing device;
receiving metadata corresponding to the media content stored in the media file from the metadata provider in response to the sent identifier value, said received metadata including an image file; and
storing the received image file in a directory with the media file, said received image file having a filename, said filename comprising an identifier value corresponding to the media content stored in the media file.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein the application program comprises at least one of the following: a media player and an operating system shell.

19. The method of claim 17, further comprising:
receiving the identifier value from the metadata provider; and
generating the filename with the received identifier value.

20. The method of claim 17, further comprising:
generating the identifier value; and
creating the filename with the generated identifier value.

21. The method of claim 17, wherein the image file comprises a reference to image data.
22. The method of claim 21, wherein the reference comprises a hyperlink.
23. The method of claim 17, wherein the identifier value comprises a globally unique identifier.
24. The method of claim 17, wherein the identifier value is associated with an identifier, said identifier comprising WMCollectionID.
25. The method of claim 17, wherein storing the received image file in the directory with the media file comprises overwriting an existing image file stored in the directory with the received image file.
26. The method of claim 17, wherein the metadata provider comprises at least one of the following: a user, a local computing device, and a third party art provider.
27. The method of claim 17, wherein the media content comprises audio data, and wherein the received image file comprises album cover art associated with the audio data.
28. One or more computer-readable media having computer-executable instructions for performing the method of claim 17.
29. One or more computer-readable media having computer-executable components for processing a media file in response to a user selecting media content for rendering with an application program executed by a computing device, said components comprising:

a resolution component for determining whether a user-selected image file is stored in a memory accessible by the computing device, said user-selected image file corresponding to media content stored in the media file to be rendered with the application program executed by the computing device, said resolution component further determining whether a third-party image file accessible by the computing device corresponds to the media file if the user-selected image file is not stored in the memory; and

a user interface component for displaying either the user-selected image file or the third-party image file as determined by the resolution component when the application program renders the media file corresponding thereto.

30. The computer-readable media of claim 29, wherein the application program comprises at least one of the following: a media player and an operating system shell.

31. The computer-readable media of claim 29, further comprising a communications component for:

sending an identifier value associated with the media file from the computing device to a metadata provider; and

receiving metadata corresponding to the media content stored in the media file from the metadata provider in response to the sent identifier value, said received metadata including the third-party image file.

32. The computer-readable media of claim 31, further comprising an authoring component for storing the third-party image file received via the communications component in a directory with the media file, said received third-party image file having a filename, said filename comprising an identifier value corresponding to the media content.

33. The computer-readable media of claim 29, wherein the third-party image file has a filename associated therewith, and wherein the resolution component searches for an identifier value in the filename in determining whether the third-party image file is

accessible to the computing device, said identifier value being associated with an identifier and corresponding to the media content.

34. The computer-readable media of claim 33, wherein the identifier comprises WMCollectionID.

35. The computer-readable media of claim 29, wherein the identifier value comprises a globally unique identifier.

36. The computer-readable media of claim 29, wherein the third-party image file comprises a reference to image data.

37. The computer-readable media of claim 36, wherein the reference comprises a hyperlink.

38. The computer-readable media of claim 29, wherein the media content comprises audio data, and wherein the third-party image file comprises album cover art associated with the audio data.

39. A computer-readable medium having stored thereon a data structure representing a file directory accessible by a computing device, said data structure comprising:

a media file storing media content for rendering with an application program executed by the computing device; and

an image file corresponding to the media file, said image file having a filename associated therewith, said filename comprising an identifier value associated with the media content in the media file corresponding thereto.

40. The computer-readable medium of claim 39, wherein said identifier value has an identifier associated therewith, said identifier comprising WM/WMCollectionID.

41. The computer-readable medium of claim 39, wherein the identifier value comprises a globally unique identifier.

42. The computer-readable medium of claim 39, wherein the image file comprises a reference to image data.

43. The computer-readable medium of claim 42, wherein the reference comprises a hyperlink.

44. The computer-readable medium of claim 39, wherein the media file stores audio data and wherein the image file stores album cover art associated with the audio data.

45. A filename for an image file associated with a media file, said media file storing media content, said filename comprising:

an identifier value associated with the media content, wherein an application program executed by a computing device searches a file system for the image file using the identifier value to display the image file while rendering the media content.

46. The filename of claim 45, wherein the application program comprises at least one of the following: a media player and an operating system shell.

47. The filename of claim 45, wherein the identifier value comprises a globally unique identifier.

48. The filename of claim 45, wherein the identifier value is associated with an identifier, said identifier being labeled WMCollectionID.

49. The filename of claim 45, wherein the image file comprises a reference to image data.

50. The filename of claim 49, wherein the reference comprises a hyperlink.